

Famous Artists Course for Talented Young People  
Famous Artists Schools, Inc., Westport, Connecticut

Section

# 3

Observation—  
drawing

#### Guiding Faculty

Albert Dorne, Founder  
[1904-1965]

Norman Rockwell  
Al Parker  
Ben Stahl  
Stevan Dohanos  
Jon Whitcomb  
Robert Fawcett  
Peter Helck  
Austin Briggs  
Harold Von Schmidt  
George Giusti  
Fred Ludekens  
Bernard Fuchs  
Bob Peak  
Tom Allen  
Lorraine Fox  
Franklin McMahon

Ben Shahn  
Doris Lee  
Dong Kingman  
Arnold Blanch  
Adolf Dehn  
Fletcher Martin  
Will Barnet  
Syd Solomon  
Julian Levi  
Joseph Hirsch

Milton Caniff  
Al Capp  
Dick Cavallii  
Whitney Darrow, Jr.  
Rube Goldberg  
Harry Haenigsen  
Willard Mullin  
Virgil Partch  
Barney Tobey



## Know what you draw

Now that you've been out with your sketchbook, you know that the world is packed with things to draw. You know because you've been drawing, and drawing has sharpened your power to observe. On your way to the dentist, watching a ball game, in a car, at the theater, in a grocery store, buying shoes, walking down the street or through the park, in your own kitchen, you find the most ordinary things — things you may never have noticed before — turning into picture possibilities. As long as you keep your eyes open, you'll never run out of subjects — even if you draw every day until you're ninety.

Whenever you begin to draw something, look at it as though you'd never seen it before. It's true that your pencil makes the lines and shadings on your paper, but the main difference between a good drawing and a poor one is in the keenness of the artist's observation.

A good way to sharpen your ability to observe as an artist does is to draw in your mind's eye the things you look at. Imagine that you've got a pencil in your hand even if you haven't. Try to visualize what lines would be necessary to transfer what you see onto your paper surface. Once you ac-

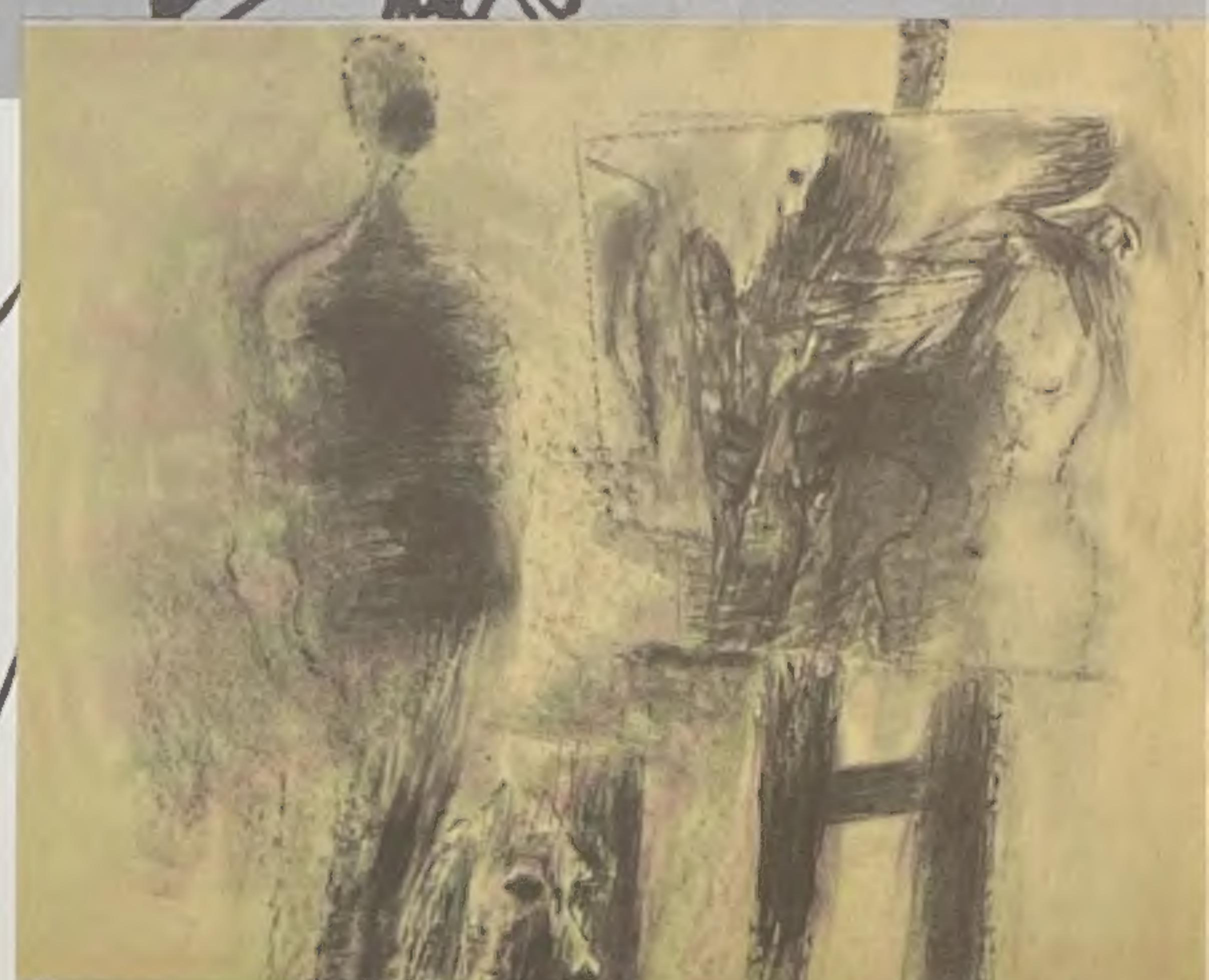


quire this habit, you'll be surprised to find how much it improves your drawing skill.

Your drawings should always reflect the character of the things you see. Imagine two pairs of shoes, one old and worn and the other brand-new. To draw the first you'd emphasize the characteristics that make them look worn — the upturned toe, the rounded-off heel, the broken laces, deep creases in the leather. By contrast, in drawing the new shoes, you'd emphasize their shiny, smooth surface, the hard, clean edges of their soles and heels.

In this Section we're going to consider some of the characteristics of things that artists look for and put into their drawings. Shape is one. Texture and value are others. We'll explore line, too, and see how the language of line can be a powerful means of expression to an artist.

Before you leave this page, take some time to study these drawings by members of the Guiding Faculty. When you need a little encouragement, turn back and look at them again. It helps to know that these artists are ignited by the same creative spark that moves you, and that they draw as diligently today as they did when, like you, they were just beginning.





Photograph by Philippe Halsman  
Courtesy of Savings & Loan Foundation, Inc.

Look at the shapes in this photograph. Even if we couldn't see any features, we'd easily recognize child shapes, held in place by the up, down and across shapes of the monkey bars. Shapes tell us what these children are doing, and that it's fun.

## Shape

Drawing begins with seeing — *really* seeing as an artist does — seeing the shapes and colors of things, seeing how dark or light they are compared to other objects near them, seeing their textures. Shapes, colors, darks and lights, textures — these are an artist's means of describing in paint the things he sees; they are what you should learn to look for and remember when you find something you want to put on paper.

First we'll examine three of these characteristics to see how you'll use them in drawing. We'll start with shape because it is the *basic* characteristic of things, and the most descriptive. Most objects in the world have typical shapes — we can recognize them by their shapes alone. You can see this in a minute by drawing the outlines of familiar everyday things. A man, a child, a car, a baseball bat, a boat, a chair

— we know them immediately, just by their shapes.

It would be hard for you to skip shape when you're describing something with words (and the same is true when you draw it). If a man is fat, fat is his shape, and that's the way you'd describe him. You might even make a wide circle with your arms to demonstrate his fatness. If you drew him, you'd show him the same way, by drawing a round, fat shape.

When you look at things with the idea of drawing them, always be conscious of their shape. The most realistic details in the world won't make an elm tree if the shape you've drawn looks like a fir. That is why, no matter how colorfully you paint things, or how much texture you add, or how truthfully you show their darks and lights, you'll begin with the characteristic that describes them best — their shape.



Though there is no detail here, it isn't hard to recognize these building shapes. Together they form the shape of a skyline; they suggest a whole city. The clouds, too, are shapes, outlined by the evening sun.

Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt  
Courtesy *Life* magazine, © Time, Inc.

A graceful white heron chose a resting place that gives us a striking study in shapes. We see several shapes here — not only the one of the heron. Note the shape made by the dark foliage — can you see how the lacy edges of the outer leaves suggest a whole mass of foliage? You see another shape, too — the soft gray one that is the quiet water.

Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt  
Courtesy *Life* magazine, © Time, Inc.



These boy shapes are as simple and clear as cutouts. Silhouettes against the sky show us that they're three climbing boys, and something in the way they seem to be hurrying tells us that they'd probably better not get caught. We don't need to see their faces — we can figure it all out through their shapes alone.

Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt  
Courtesy *Life* magazine, © Time, Inc.





Here's an example of how value helps evoke atmosphere and mood. The soft, blurred gray value of the background sweeps the air with sand; the dark values of the man and the camel in the foreground focus our attention on them, dramatizing their aloneness in a vast, empty landscape. Try to imagine the same scene photographed in the bright sunlight. The mood, like the values, would be quite different.

## Value

Value is one of the words that have special meaning for the artist. Whenever we speak of the *value* of something we are simply referring to its darkness or lightness. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. You'll find that everything you see has its own value.

Train your eye to look for differences in value, even the subtlest ones. As you look at an object, ask yourself if it's lighter or darker than the objects around it. Is the tree you're drawing darker than the sky—or lighter? Is the soaring sea gull sparkling white against the sky—or is the sky so bright the sea gull looks relatively dark against it? Being aware of these *value relationships* is very important because you'll use them in your pictures to help distinguish one object from another, and to help create solid form and the illusion of depth. You'll also find that value speaks eloquently when you want to communicate mood and emotion in your pictures.



Here values help dramatize a moment of decision. Two gentle nuns are making friendly headway with a shy little girl—even though she hesitates because they look so strange, so dark and ominous to her. Do you see how value helps draw your eye to the child? She is light in tone and the nuns, in contrasting dark tone, bend toward her and enclose her, almost like a picture frame.



Here are three objects, similar in shape and form, yet very different in texture. In drawing them you would emphasize their individual textures to help distinguish one from another.

## Texture

When you pet a horse, pack a snowball, run sand through your fingers, pick up a golf club, you experience texture. In all the world there isn't a thing that doesn't have some kind of texture. There are rough, smooth, hard, soft, slick, sticky, prickly ones—thousands of them, all different.

Wherever you are, you'll find an amazing variety of textures to stir your artistic imagination. You can prove this to yourself by looking through any window in your house and counting the different textures you see outside. We tried it, looking through our window at the backyard next door. There were flowers there, and stone walls, a back porch, trees, garbage cans and flowerpots. Within two minutes we'd found ninety-four textures, all different. You'll find as many, and more. They're just a sample of the textures that are all around, available to you as an artist.

Always look closely at textures. They are the descriptive touches that will add variety and beauty to your drawings, just as they do to nature. Textures are the adjectives in your artist's vocabulary.

Collection of the Library of Congress  
Photograph by Arthur Rothstein



You can learn about the surface textures of things through your fingers as well as through your eyes. If possible, pick up the objects you want to draw. Knowing how their textures feel will help you draw them more convincingly if you try to re-create that feeling in your picture. Make your textures look as rough, smooth, silky, soft as they feel when you touch them.

Everything in this picture seems old to the point of decay, and texture is what makes it look that way. Note the weathered siding on the house and the scaly bark barely clinging to the dead tree. If someone would take out those scrubby clumps of brush, plant some grass, cut down the tree and cover the house with a fresh coat of paint, the place would look almost young again. The shape of the house wouldn't change, but the new textures would describe a very different scene.



Woodcut by Johannes de Hildesheim  
The Pierpont Morgan Library

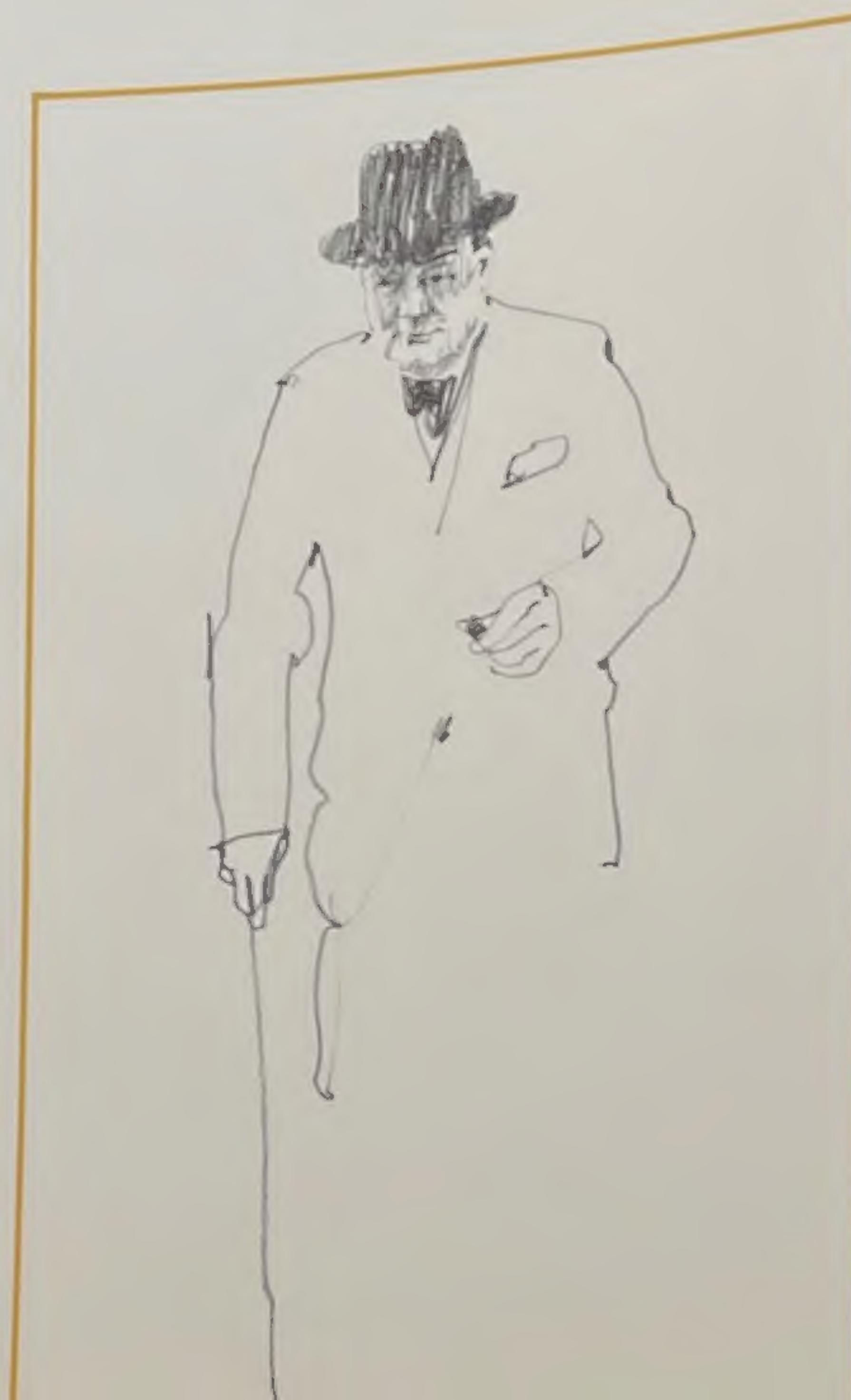


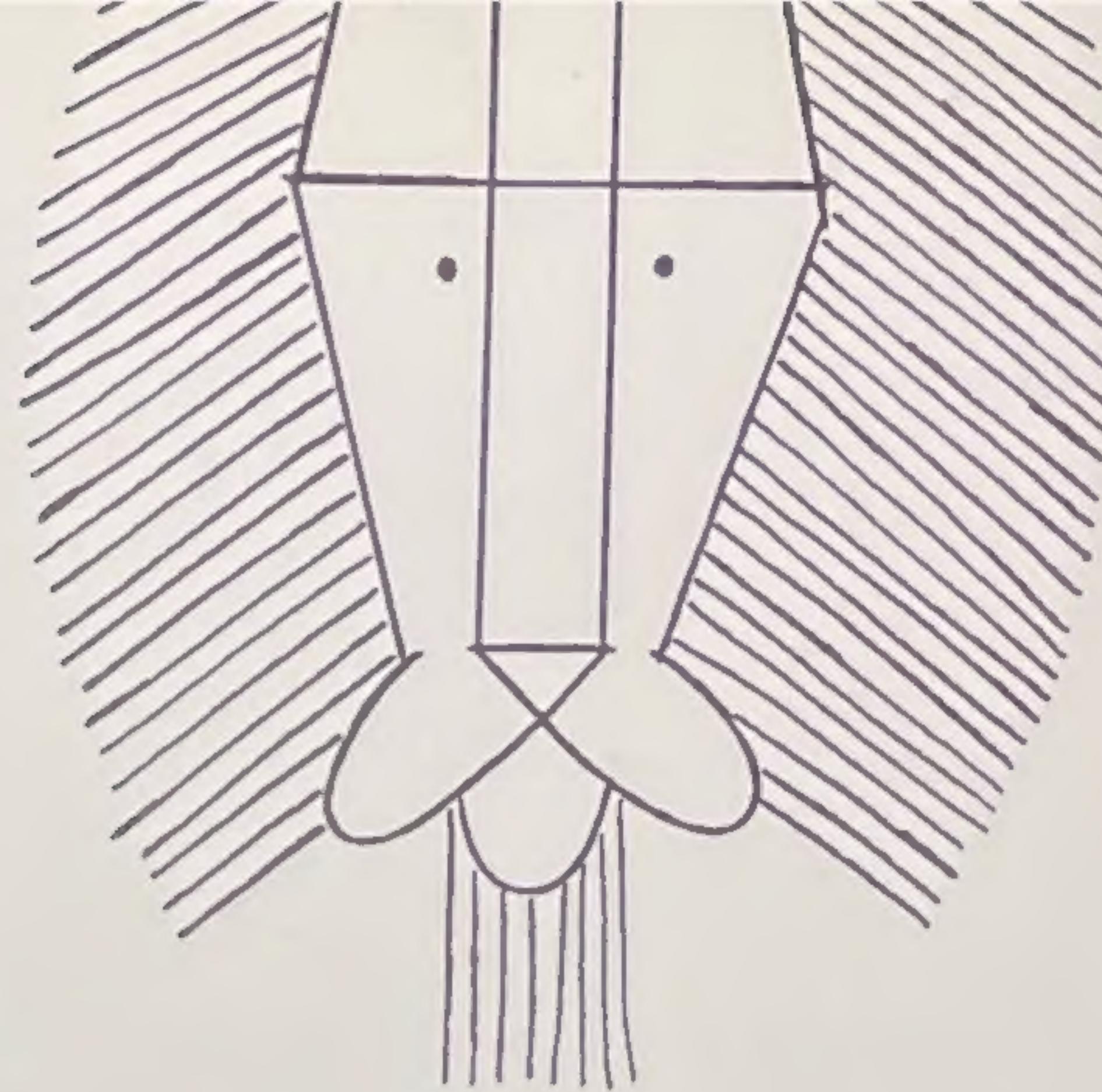
## Line

When you draw, you use *line*. You use it to describe shapes and textures and values, and you use it as one way of saying what you feel. Your lines may vary with the subject, or the effect or mood you wish to create. You may, for example, draw with lines that are as firm and rigid as those you see in the fifteenth-century woodcut above. Or you may use lines sparingly, simply to suggest the important characteristics of your subject. Bernard Fuchs' drawing of Winston Churchill at right is an example of this approach.

The variety of lines available to you is endless. Try lots and lots of them. Experiment to see what effects different tools and mediums will have on your lines. If you find that certain lines seem right for you, fine. Concentrate on them, but just be sure that you don't limit yourself too narrowly. Today you may love to draw in thin, meticulous lines, but that doesn't necessarily mean you'll feel that way tomorrow or next week.

The important thing is that you draw the line you feel. Someone else may draw a flower with a delicate line, or a charging bull with a heavy one, but that doesn't mean that you should, too. You may have an urge to draw in bold, overwhelming lines—or in curlicues. Go ahead.



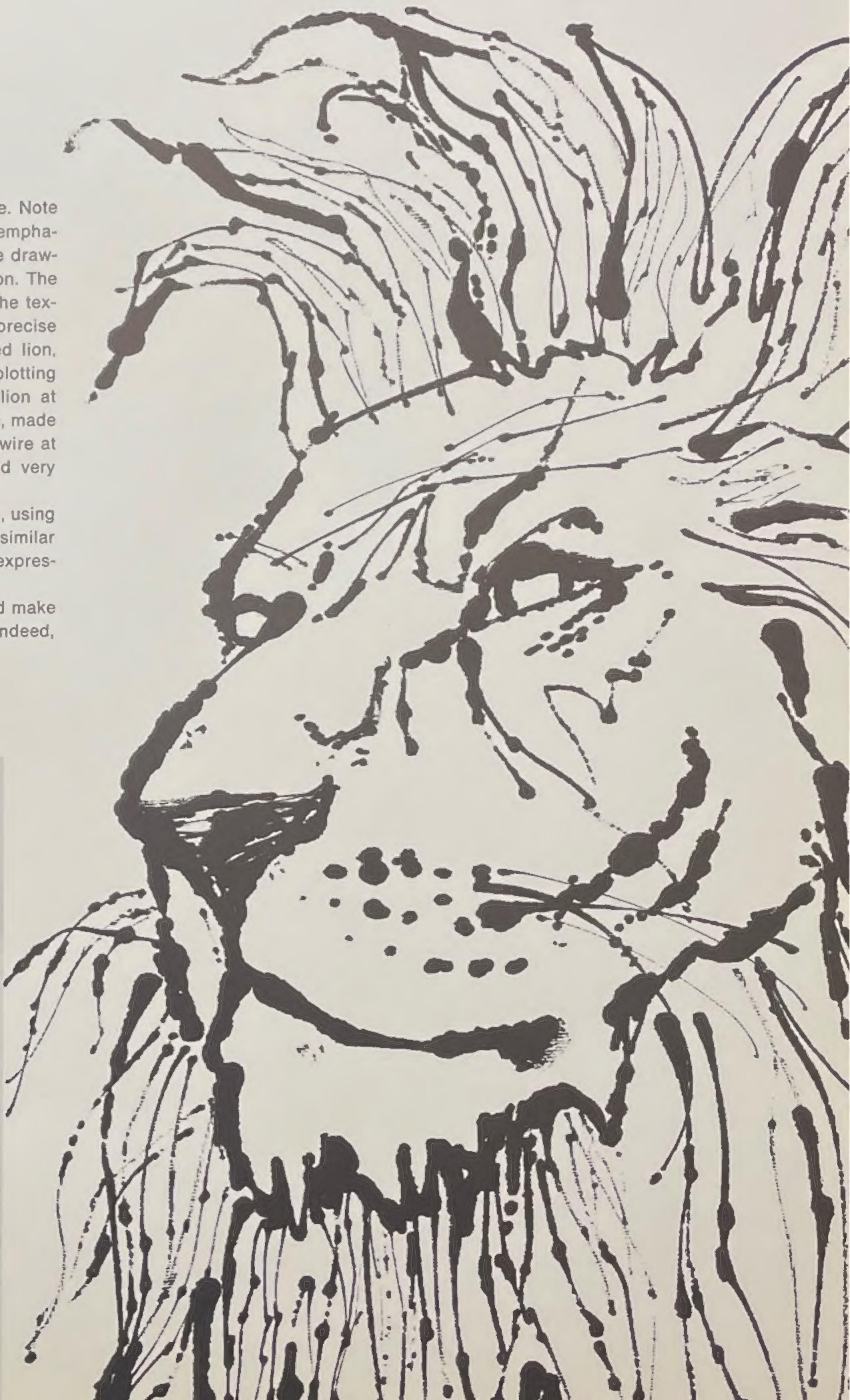


### Lions

Here are four very different lions, all created with line. Note in each picture how the quality of the line seems to emphasize a mood or feeling or a lionish characteristic. The drawing above is a rather literal portrayal of a peaceful lion. The artist's loose, soft line is a good one to help us feel the texture of the rich mane. Compare this with the more precise pattern of line with which he designed the perplexed lion, above right. Bold, dark forceful ink lines drawn on blotting paper were used effectively to create the majestic lion at right. And the animal below is a piece of line sculpture, made with flexible copper wire. Try it. You can buy copper wire at your hardware store. It's fun to experiment with and very easy to control.

Try all the lions on this page, and create some more, using line in your own way. It may be that your lines will be similar to ours; it may turn out that you'll find better, more expressive ones.

What can you do with other animals? A skunk would make a good subject for line. So would a porcupine. So, indeed, would any subject you choose.



## Working with shape

Shape, like line, is a means of expression, and often an artist will distort, alter or exaggerate a shape to emphasize his feelings about what he is drawing.

Look closely at the three shapes on this page. At first glance they say "horse." Yet how much more they say! You don't need details to know that one horse is young and strong, another old and tired, and that the third is a wild horse, rearing right out of the artist's imagination.

We'd like you to see how many expressive shapes you can create. Work in any medium; use a horse, or a different animal if you'd rather. Try some things that are inanimate, too. A flower, for example, can look droopy and sad, or joyful, or straggly or windblown—all depending on how you draw its shape. Decide what you want your shape to say, what feeling you want your drawing to have, then draw the shape that says it best. If you feel like exaggerating, go ahead.



Here the artist drew a very realistic shape, easy to recognize as a frisky young horse, ready to take off at a gallop. Now look at the poor old nag below. See how her poor back sags, how her neck droops and her head hangs low. The artist exaggerated those characteristics which would arouse your sympathy.



This one's pure fancy and pure fun, wildly exaggerated because the artist wanted him to look more spirited, more fiery than any real-life horse could ever be.





### Shapes in pictures

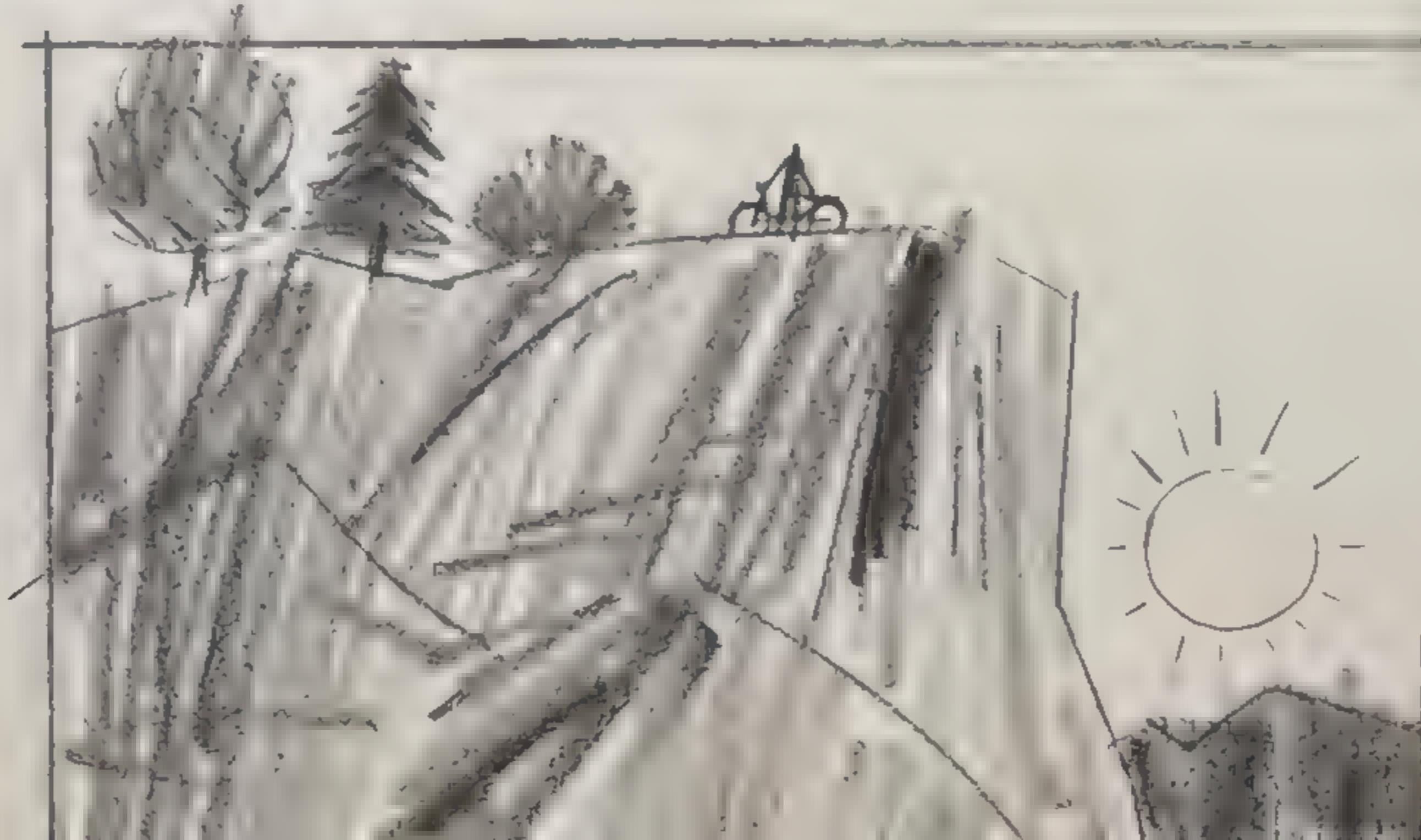
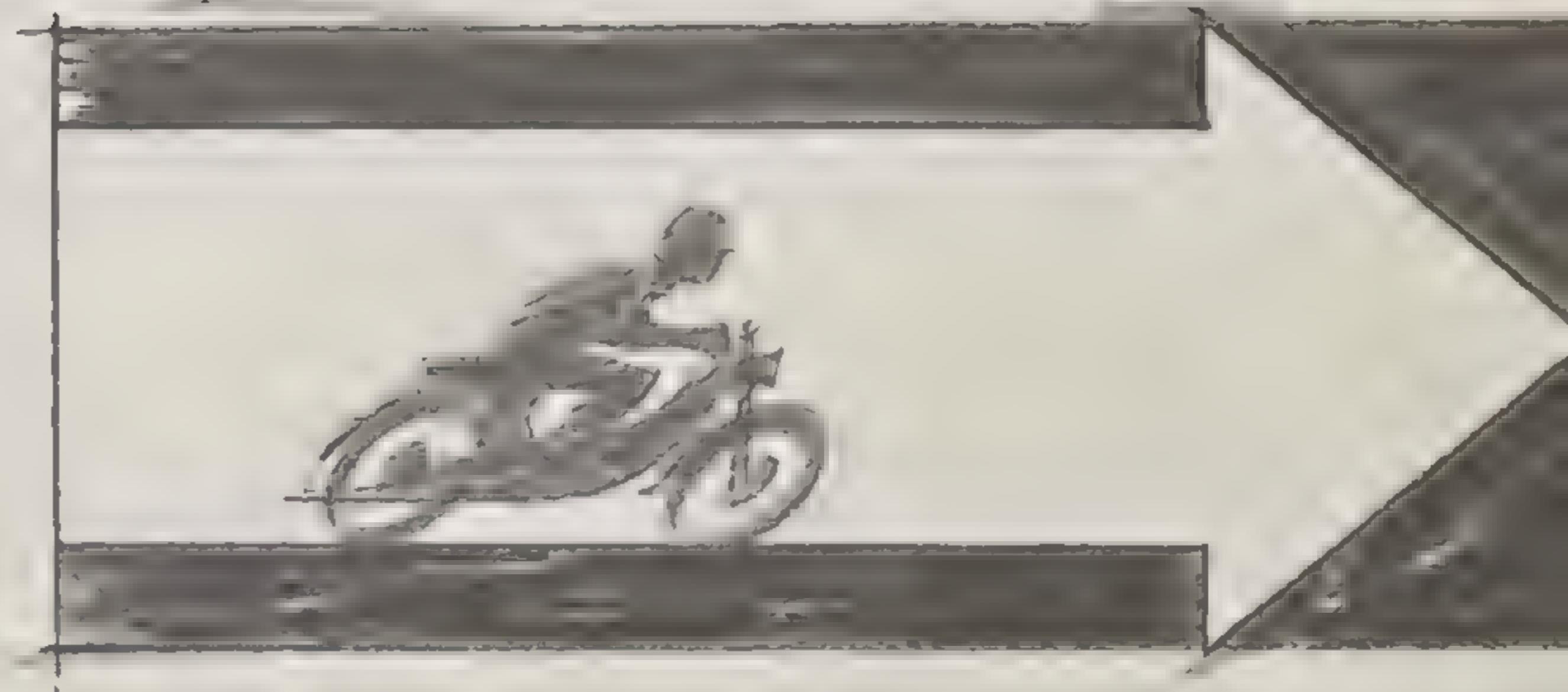
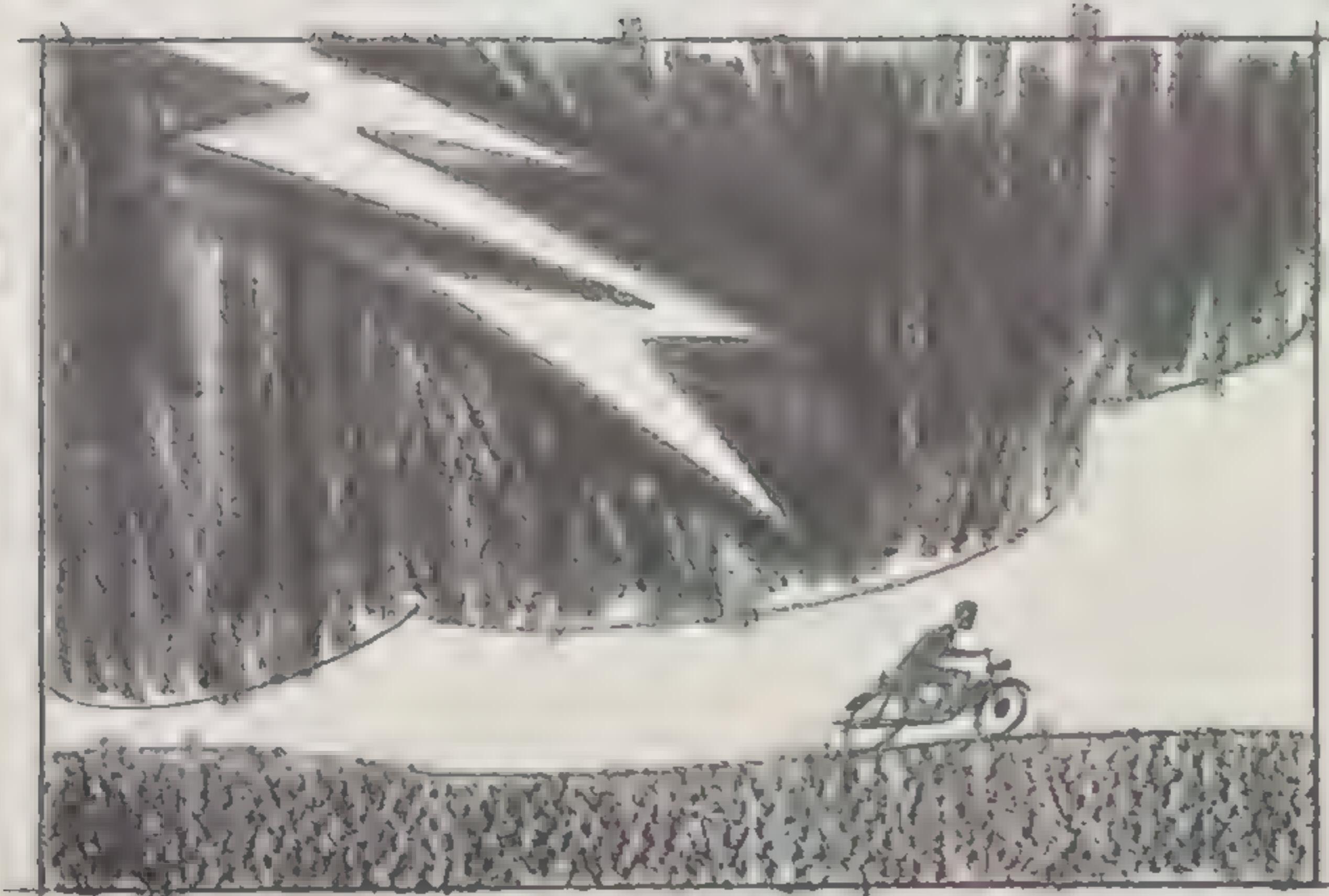
Now we want you to start thinking about using shapes to compose effective pictures. The shape at left is easy to recognize—a boy on a motorbike. We've put him in the diagrams below to show you how all the shapes in a picture can help create mood, or tell a story.

Look first at the composition at lower left. Here we wanted the threatening storm to dominate the picture, so we made the heavy, ominous cloud shape and the piercing lightning shape appear to be pressing down on the fleeing boy. We don't need more to tell us that he'd better get out of there—fast.

Below, at right, we've put boy and bike in a poster design. Posters should be planned with simple shapes that carry a strong visual impact and get the message across quickly. This one gives us an immediate sense of speed.

We've arranged the shapes in the picture at bottom to create a pleasing design and a mood of tranquility. Perhaps the storm has passed and the boy has pulled up for a moment to watch the sun sink below the distant peak. In contrast to the menacing cloud shape in our first composition, this cliff shape looks solid, serene, and as safe as home.

Now we'd like you to start thinking about complete pictures by taking any subject you like and putting it into some picture diagrams of your own. Keep your drawings simple—no details. Try to create one effect and then another by the way you *arrange your shapes* in your picture space. Make *all* your shapes work to tell your story.





Contrasting values create an exciting pattern for this vibrant street scene by Dong Kingman

Playground in Savannah  
Courtesy Look magazine, copyright 1965  
Cowles Communications, Inc



In this high-key painting by Austin Briggs, carefully placed accents of dark tone shelter the little girls with a leafy canopy and, at the same time, pull our eye to the one who is swinging high

Tom Allen used a low key to paint his conception of fear in the city parks. Note how the well-placed accents of light tone add drama to the dark and ominous composition

Courtesy McCall's



## Putting value to work

The range of values an artist chooses for his painting is called his *value key*. If he paints a picture in light tones it is said to be in a *high key*. Similarly, a picture painted in dark, somber tones is in a *low key*. There are *middle-key* pictures, too, and others that use the whole scale.

To help you visualize the value range, we've painted a simple scale, at right, dividing it into seven steps. We could, of course, slice it into any number of gradations, but in this case we didn't want to make the differences between grays so slight you'd have trouble distinguishing one from the next.

Value can be a big help in conveying mood. You'll see that this is true if you look closely at the three paintings on the facing page. Dong Kingman captures the bustle and excitement of a sunny street in Lisbon, Portugal, with strongly contrasting values that cover the whole keyboard, from white to black. Austin Briggs has appropriately chosen a

high key for the light-hearted summery painting of two happy little girls. Tom Allen's picture illustrated a magazine article titled "Fear Takes Over Our City Parks." The low key is just right for the sense of terror he conveys very powerfully.

It's sometimes hard to find the tonal differences in a picture, particularly if the values are fairly similar. Try looking at it with your eyes squinted. This helps, too, when you're looking for values out-of-doors. Squinting your eyes blurs the details of things, leaving the large value areas uncluttered and more distinct.

It may turn out that you'll enjoy working in one value range more than others. As a matter of fact, you probably will; it will fit your mood and the mood of your subject. Just the same, experiment with all of them. Your ideas about color and value may change, and if they do, we want you to be able to work in whatever tones your feelings dictate.

### A simple way to plan your values



In painting this picture, we used values from the middle of the scale at right, adding the slightest touches of white and black for accents. Now we want you to arrange these musicians in three picture compositions of your own. Concentrate on the

light values, from the top of the scale, for your first picture; paint your second in the three darkest tones. Then, for your third, use the whole scale. We've included the three tonal diagrams below to guide you. Work in oils or watercolor



Use these tones for one of your picture compositions. They're the lightest values, the same as those numbered 1, 2 and 3 on the scale at right. A small dark accent or two will add interest without killing the overall high key of your picture.



Here are the three darkest tones, numbered 5, 6 and 7 on the scale. Put them in your second composition. Don't forget that a spot or two of white can add dramatic contrast to a picture painted in dark values.



These tones run the *full* value range from white to black—1 to 7 on the scale. Use the full range of values in one of your pictures, but don't feel that you have to touch every base. Too many different tones might make your picture look cluttered.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7



## Exploring texture

Seeing and touching are the keys to knowing textures. Before you try to draw a texture, you should know its nature. Your fingers as well as your eyes should be familiar with it, for texture is the *feel* and the *look* of things. The roughness of a shingle is different from the roughness of a brick; a flower petal is smooth in a soft way, a pebble has a *hard* smoothness.

Go out and look for the textures that you like. Bring back the things you respond to, and keep them someplace where you can enjoy looking at them. Artists are habitual collectors, cluttering up their studios with whatever they think would be nice to have around — rocks, possibly, and fabric, driftwood, dried flowers, bones, rusty metal, leaves. Look in your wastebasket for discarded things; walk through the woods, search your garden, your garage. Be always on the lookout for the textures that interest you. One of your treasures might look like junk to someone else, but don't be swayed by that. Nothing is less likely to attract the eye than a run-over soft drink can, but we liked the shiny crumpled surface of one we saw, so we picked it up off the street and put it in our collage above.

### Make a collage

Study this collage for a moment and you'll see that it's made entirely of textural objects that are easy to find. After you've

collected a number of things, select a few that you think would go well together and put them into a collage of your own. In deciding which things to use, look for contrasts and variety in textures. Pick soft and hard objects, smooth and rough ones, prickly ones, fluffy ones, whatever combination you think will make an interesting textural arrangement.

Making a collage helps you see how one texture can complement and enhance another. It will also help with your painting because it teaches you to relate shapes, textures, values and lines on a flat surface.

Use any substantial material for your collage backing. Wallboard works well; so does heavy cardboard. You'll see that we used a piece of weathered wood for ours. We liked it because it had a beautiful texture of its own which we used as part of our design.

Keep arranging and rearranging your materials until they look right to you. Then attach everything in place on the backing. You can nail or staple them on, or, if you prefer, use any of the new glues that adhere well to stubborn surfaces.

Your collage can be as big or as small as you like, depending on the number and size of materials you use. When you're finished, if you like it, hang it on your wall. Look at it, touch its different textures. Then you might try drawing or painting it — a collage makes a challenging subject.



### Drawing and painting texture

Learning to draw textures is exciting, but it takes practice and a lot of experimenting. Try different mediums and tools. An artist may add sand or sawdust or gravel to his paint to give it a textural quality. He may use his oils right from the tube and paint very thickly to get the right effect. Different kinds of pencil and pen lines, you'll remember, create different textures. And don't forget rubbing and the unusual tools you tried with ink. Sponge, wadded tissue paper, string, the edge of a piece of cardboard, pipe cleaners, all create textures of their own. You can use them with paint, too.

Above and below we show you how two different artists interpreted the same textures. They both worked from the photograph, at right, of a pile of objects washed up by the sea. In the drawing above, the artist, working only in line, dramatized the variety of textures he saw. The other artist used those textures as the source for an abstract painting. He added sand to his oils to try to make us *feel* texture as well as see it.

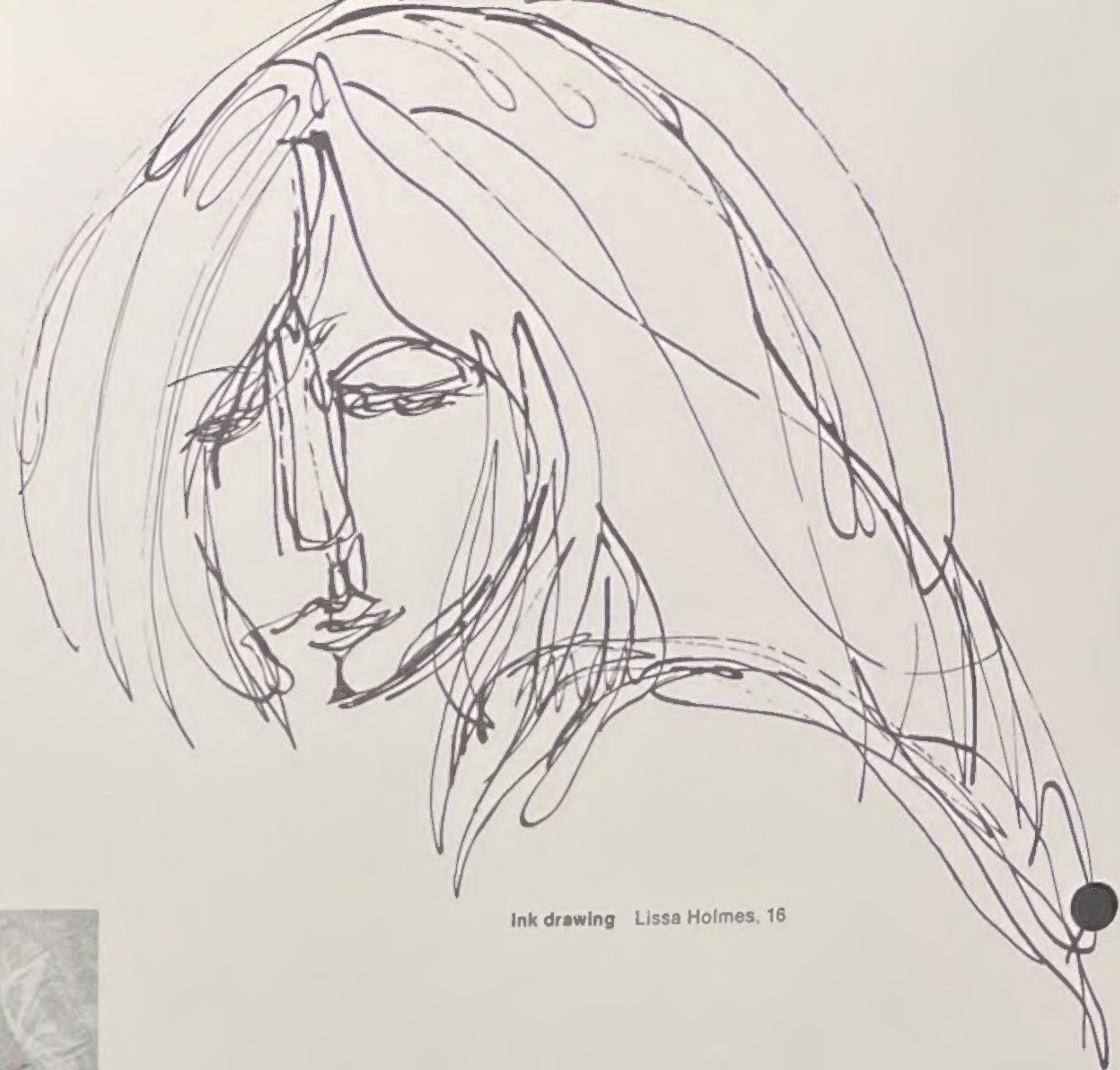
These are only two of many, many ways of interpreting texture in drawing and painting. Experiment with the tools and materials you know and you'll find ways of your own.



# Gallery

## Pictures by young people

The pictures on these pages are all by people in their teens. They've used line, shape, value and texture in a variety of mediums, from collage to pen and ink, to express their personal feelings about their subjects. When you paint or draw, seek your own ways of expression, as these people have done. All pictures courtesy of Scholastic Magazines, New York.



Ink drawing Lissa Holmes, 16



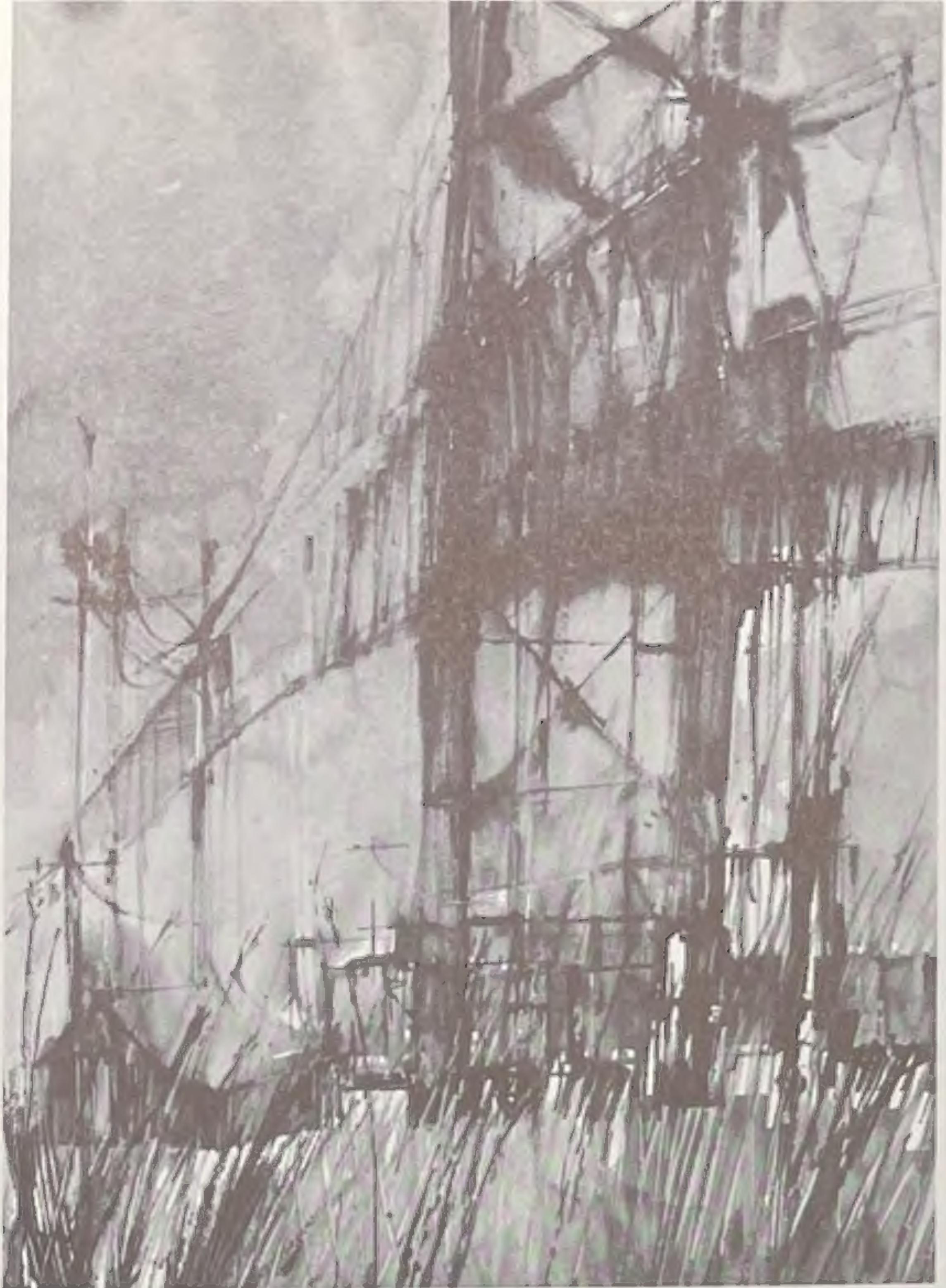
Mixed media Pamela Glass, 17

Mixed media Victor Jodinskas, 16

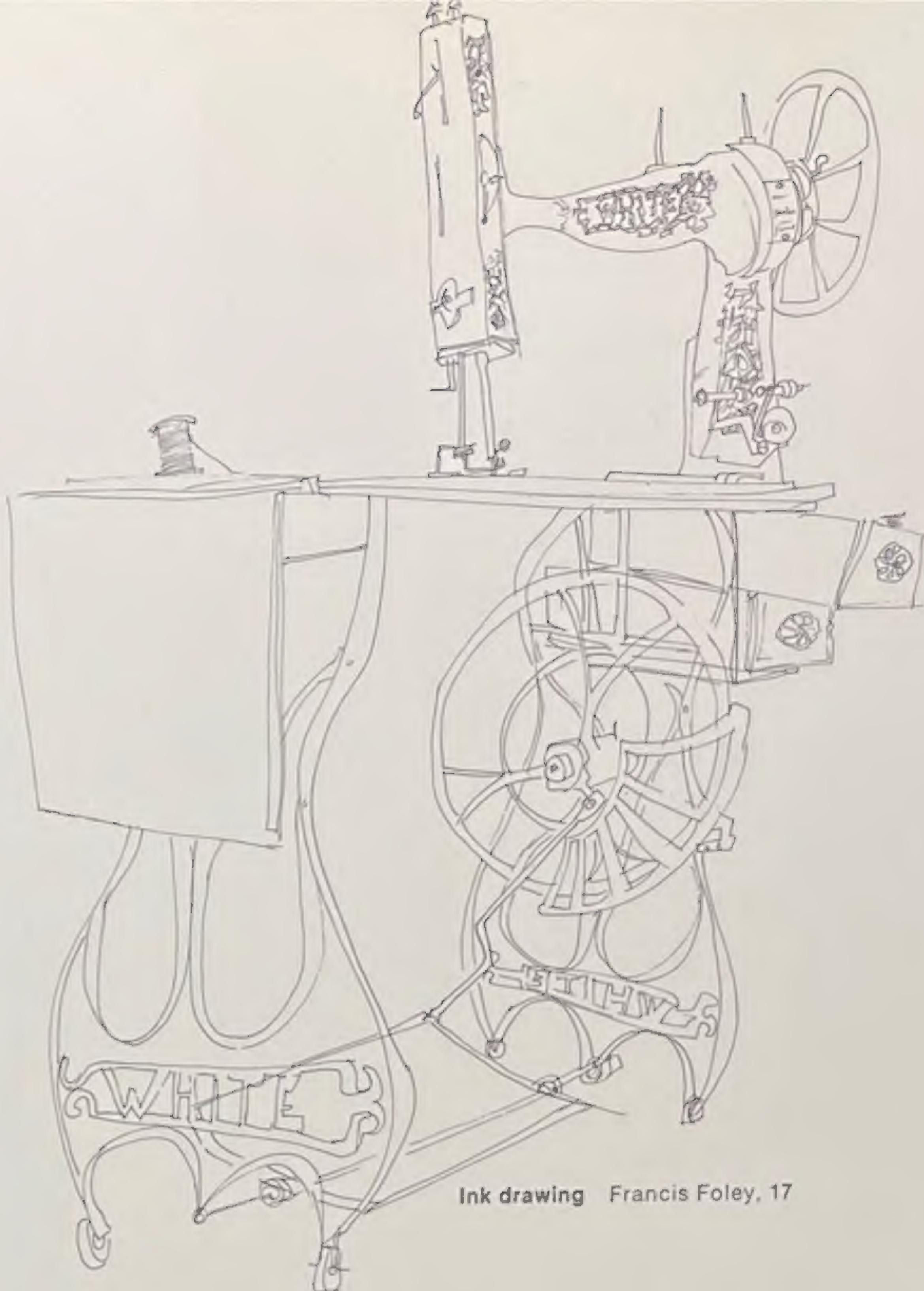


Collage Susan Diamond, 17





Transparent watercolor Todd Smith, 17



Ink drawing Francis Foley, 17



Opaque watercolor Debbie Bates, 16



Mont Sainte-Victoire — Oil  
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Mont Sainte-Victoire — Oil  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
George W. Elkins Collection



View of Mont Sainte-Victoire — Watercolor  
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge  
Gift of Mr. Henry P. McIlhenny

## Each time is new

Just as you never see a scene in exactly the same way as someone else, you see it differently yourself from one time to the next. So many circumstances affect your artistic vision — the time of year, the time of day, the weather and, not the least, your own emotional responses.

Cézanne, the great nineteenth-century French painter, painted one subject over and over — a mountain near his studio in Aix-en-Provence. Again and again he turned to Mont Sainte-Victoire as a subject for his paints and each result was unique. You see three of them reproduced here, two in oil and one in watercolor.

You might like to experiment with this idea yourself. Pick a subject that particularly interests you. Return to it at different times of day, on different days, in different moods. Use any mediums you choose. If you let yourself be affected each time as if it were the first time, you'll never see or paint the same picture twice.

SEE  
OBSERVE  
REMEMBER